



banned it and instead the film was shown with great success in cinemas. 'It was a very difficult part to play,' he admits. 'I had to go into it in a way of course. I had to kiss a man at one point, and I wanted to try and find out what I really felt about the experience. I think I came out of it all with a better understanding of a homosexual's predicament. I know that I would not have done the movie had it not been directed by Wolfgang Pederson, who was a close personal friend of mine and I knew had the sensitivity to handle it well.'

The Consequence made Prochnow a star in Germany, but his next collaboration with Pederson made him an international one. The hardships of making *The Boat* proved worthwhile when the film became a hit all round the world. Like *The Consequence* it was originally conceived for television. 'We had two versions', the actor told me. 'There was a long six hour one for television and a two and a half hour movie. But we always knew the movie would be on release before the television version was shown. I would certainly say it was shot under movie con-



Jurgen and Jackie Bisset in 'Forbidden'.

ditions. In the States it opened in a few little theatres in New York and just got bigger and bigger, and soon it became a cult movie. People started raving about it. Then it came to England and France and I began to get offers of work on international productions.'

Suitably recovered from his harrowing experiences making the film he took the lead in a romantic drama called *Love Is Forever*, and then travelled to England to star opposite Scot Glenn and Ian McKellen in *The Keep*, a spectacular horror fantasy which cast him as the commander of a group of German soldiers who take over an old Rumanian fortress during World War 2 — and discover that the place is already inhabited by a hideous demon! As directed by the American creator of *Starsky and Hutch*, Michael Mann, it was an artistic success but a commercial failure, denied a cinema release in this country and instead going straight to (CIC) video. 'It had many interesting, challenging scenes, and wonderful set design by John Box,' Jurgen pointed out. 'But if it doesn't work in the end then you ask yourself why. Everyone involved feels responsible.'

A colossal budget and lots of extravagant special effects were similarly a feature of Prochnow's next movie outing. When I confessed that I didn't remember him in *Dune*, he pointed out 'You probably missed me because I died about halfway through. I was Duke Leto, Paul's father — Oh!, and I had a beard! It was a big production (the film, not his beard),


but very well organised by the director, David Lynch, who I think is a genius. In the end the movie didn't do as well as I thought it would, but it was a great experience making it. I think its main problem was in condensing such a huge novel into movie length. David did it very well in his screenplay, but we shot far more than was ever used and maybe you needed the longer running time to understand better what was going on.'

Though he was in town to promote the release of *Forbidden*, this strong drama wasn't Jurgen's latest spell in front of the camera. 'I've recently done a German movie called *The Carpenter and the Lady*' he pointed out, 'and a CBS TV movie called *Murder By Reason of Insanity* for the same director as *Forbidden*, Anthony Page. It's about a man who lost his job and started beating up his wife. She divorced him and he ended up in a mental hospital. When he got out on a day release he went home and killed her with a knife. A very interesting story, don't you think?'

Finally I asked him whether he would prefer to work on intimate dramas like *Forbidden* or the spectacular big budget fantasies like *The Keep* and *Dune*. He smiled: 'I'm interested in movies of all types, in good parts portraying real characters. It's not a question of money in the end. Every story demands its own budget to be able to shoot it properly. I like my profession very much and if I find interesting characters to play then it's wonderful.'

VW





IT'S A MAD MAD MAD MAD MAD MAD MAX

In a time of chaos and broken dreams lived a road warrior of dubious sanity . . . or perhaps he was the sanest of them all.

BY ALLAN BRYCE

The movie world was introduced to Max Rockatansky for the first time back in 1979, when he was a decent young copper fighting the gangs of nomad bikers that roamed a decaying post-holocaust Australian outback. Max firmly believed in the power of law and order — until his family were brutally taken from him by the marauders. Then he turned vigilante, setting off behind the wheel of his supercharged Interceptor vehicle with deadly vengeance in mind. He got it too — beating and blasting his way through the bad guys until he came to the ringleader. Chaining him by his arm to his own vehicle, Max sprinkled petrol everywhere and struck a match. Seeing what he was about to do, the nasty piece of work pleaded for his life. Sneeringly Max then threw the man a hacksaw and told him he had a few seconds to saw his own arm off if he wanted to escape being burned alive. Then he dropped the match. The man wasn't fast enough! After that, people began treating him with new respect. They dropped his surname altogether and started calling him Mad Max.

The original *Mad Max* was a tough exploitation movie that became the biggest moneymaking Australian film of all time, and a real breakthrough for the burgeoning Australian film industry. Although many Aussie movies prior to it had gone down well with the critics, most were too ethnic to find large audiences outside their home country. But by placing their story in a futuristic setting and stylising costumes, cars and locations, producer Byron Kennedy and director George Miller had at last managed to make a truly international movie that translated well to audiences around the world. Miller said 'The Japanese thought *Mad Max* was like a Samurai film; the Italians thought it was like a Spaghetti western; and so on. When *Mad Max* was released, it soon became the number six film in Spain, number four in Japan, five in Germany, Switzerland, England ...' The only market that the movie fared poorly in was, unfortunately, the most lucrative and important of all — the American one. It's American distributor, Filmways, re-dubbed the film's supposedly 'unintelligible' Australian dialogue and then gave it scant distribution despite the mostly ecstatic reviews that followed it around. Nevertheless the movie was an astounding commercial success, grossing a hundred million dollars worldwide — for an investment of just four hundred thousand!

This was good news for director George Miller, a former doctor who got the idea for the film after working in a hospital casualty department and witnessing the victims of many grisly car wrecks. Miller was born in 1945 in a tiny Australian township called Chinchilla (population 400), where there was no television or cinema. Then he moved with his family to Sydney, where he began to catch up on his movie education, later taking a course at a film workshop in Melbourne and meeting up with Byron Ken-

IT'S A MAD



MAD MAD MAX

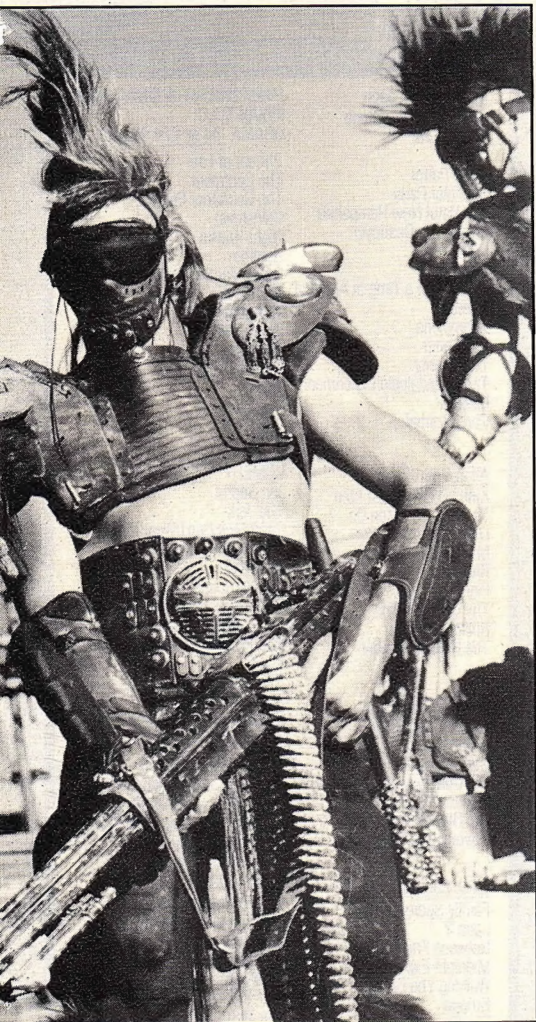
nedy, a film student with similar ideas. Miller got his medical degree and began working at a Sydney hospital while Kennedy and he spent their spare time writing screenplays and producing short films. One of these, a 14-minute satire called *Violence In The Cinema* won two Australian Film Institute Awards and helped them find finance for their first feature. After the success of *Mad Max*, George Miller could hang up his surgical gown for good.

The astounding popularity of the original *Mad Max* movie may have been largely

down to the kinetic skill with which it was assembled, but there was no denying its main role had also been perfectly cast, throwing a new name into the melting pot of international stardom. Max was played with a brooding intensity by Mel Gibson, a then-unknown former New Yorker (born 1956) who had moved to Melbourne with his eleven brothers and sisters at the age of 12. The handsome young man was completing a three year course at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art when Miller screen tested him for Max. 'I just knew he had something — a particular quality that is hard to define' said the director. So he signed him up on the spot and the rest, as they say, is history.

Despite its success, Miller and Kennedy were not particularly happy with their first feature film. 'It was like taking a big dog on a walk' said Miller. 'It gets away from you and you start running!

That's how I felt making the first film. That's why in many ways it's not that good. We got on screen about twenty percent of what we actually wanted.' The whole idea of the original was built around Miller and Kennedy's vision of the ultimate chase, but the movie's low budget and the trying circumstances under which it had been shot had prevented them from achieving their aims. They had no plans to make a sequel. But Max was too popular a hero to just fade away into the post-holocaust desert. Many distributors pleaded with the film-



gus (Kjell Nilsson), a sado-masochistic nasty clad in a weird mixture of bondage gear culled by wardrobe lady Norma Moricaeu from looking at the pages of 'gay' magazines!

Mad Max II is far more ambitious than the first movie. Instead of being the traditional wronged hero out for revenge, Max now becomes an almost mythical figure striding through a world gone mad and rediscovering his own humanity by helping others. He also gets a couple of side-kicks — in the persons of Gyro Captain (Bruce Spence), who flies a strange looking one-man helicopter, and a feral eight year old child (Emil Minty) who never utters a word throughout the movie. The latter's unspoken relationship with tough and cynical Max gives both characters an even greater depth, and Gibson's greater maturity as an actor is evident throughout.

Kennedy and Miller had stated their aim to put on film the ultimate chase sequence, and the sequel enabled them to show this wasn't just an idle boast. The climax sees Max and Humungus battling it out in one of the most hair-raising, thrill-a-second road races ever to grace the screen. Cars, bikes, lorries and people are thrown in all directions as the action hurtles along to the inevitable triumph of our indestructible hero. The stunts were amazing, and brilliantly captured from all angles by Miller's kinetic camera.

Right: From the first in the series, Mel Gibson as Max Rockatansky, known as 'Mad' to his mates.

Left: The awesome figure of Auntie Entity, played by the incredible Tina Turner in Warner's new release 'Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome'.



terested him more. But Kennedy had just about talked him around to his way of thinking when, in July 1983, he was tragically killed in a helicopter crash. Miller was devastated, then determined to go ahead with a third Max outing after all — this time dedicated to the memory of his friend.

The opening scenes of the third Max outing, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* show our hero wandering the desert with a camel train. This scene was shot in Southern Australia's barren Cooper Pedy, where temperatures topped the 140 degree mark, causing a dozen members of the crew to collapse from exhaustion before the gruelling twelve week shooting schedule was concluded. Miller describes the background to the opening shot this way: 'In my mind it's about fifteen years since the end of *The Road Warrior*. I imagine Max has had a number of adventures and has basically survived them all. As resources have diminished, he has built up his capital, which is his camel train. By the start of this movie there is no fuel left, so he just scavenges about finding things necessary for survival. He's ready for anything.'

But is Max ready for the awesome Auntie Entity who rules over the evil desert society of Bartertown? Auntie is played by legendary rock star Tina Turner, who wears 70lbs of chain mail, is armed with a lethal crossbow, and looks like the sort of woman that even Mad Max should think

makers to continue his adventures, and gradually Kennedy and Miller realised that this might offer them a chance to actually put that ultimate chase on celluloid. So, backed by Warner, (who distributed the original around the world) *Mad Max II* went into production.

Subtitled *The Road Warrior* and set (as a narrator informs us during a prologue that recaps the first film), 'In a time of chaos and broken dreams,' the movie is that rarest of animals: a sequel that actually surpasses its predecessor. 'On the roads it was a white-line nightmare' says that narrator as once again we meet the black-leather-garbed Max (Gibson), now alone in an ever more decrepit world and much against his better judgement helping a group of fellow survivors defend their home — a primitive oil refinery — against a horde of maniacal scavengers led by a character named Humon-

Mad Max II was predictably a major success, this time cracking the American market and making its star and director both very hot properties in the international movie world. After starring in the Australian Peter Weir's acclaimed *Year of Living Dangerously*, Gibson immediately walked into major roles in the Stateside productions *Mrs Soffel* and *The River*, as well as playing Fletcher Christian opposite Anthony Hopkins' Captain Bligh in an expensive remake of *The Bounty*.

Meanwhile Miller did a mini-series for Australian television and was then summoned to America by Mad Max admirer Steven Spielberg to shoot a segment of his forthcoming *Twilight Zone* movie. His story, *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet*, which told of plane passenger John Lithgow's unfortunate encounter with a monstrous alien, was generally regarded as the best of a varied bunch.

So great had been the worldwide popularity of *Mad Max II* that the pressure was now on Miller to continue the Road Warrior's adventures. Producer Byron Kennedy was keen on the idea, but Miller wasn't. He had other projects that in-

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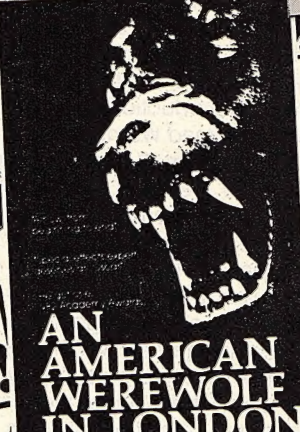
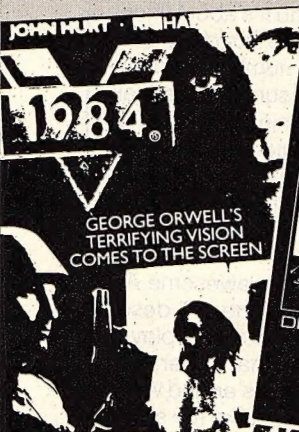
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Also immaculately choreographed is Maurice Jarre's contribution to the movie. This famed French composer, better known for his Oscar winning scores like *Dr Zhivago*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *A Passage To India*, uses a rock band, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, a choir, and some pretty strange instruments to provide a powerful musical accompaniment to Max's latest adventure. The Thunderdome battle is scored with a circus organ, while many of the more eerie atmospherics are captured on an aboriginal didgeridoo, a low-droning wooden flute hollowed out by termites. And if you have a hi-fi video then you'll be able to appreciate his efforts even more, because the Warners' tape is in sparkling stereo.

Left: Max and his Aunty Entity from 'Beyond Thunderdome'.

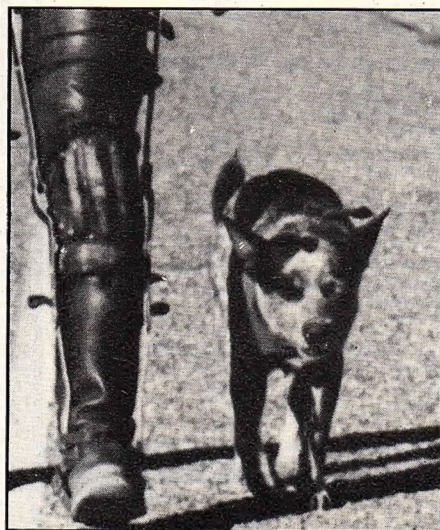
Below: Max's best friend, as featured in the second in the series 'Mad Max II: The Road Warrior'.

twice about crossing. Born in Nutbush, Tennessee in 1939, Tina's raunchy looks and talent for belting out songs like *River Deep*, *Mountain High* and *Honky Tonk Woman* have kept her consistently at the top of the charts for the last twenty years. Her previous acting experience may have been limited to one role in Ken Russell's *Tommy* film over a decade ago, but she nevertheless does an excellent job here, and as a bonus delivers a theme song that not so surprisingly has become another chart-buster. Another interesting piece of casting can be found in veteran actor Angelo Rossito as The Master, an evil dwarf employee of Turner's. Rossito started his movie career back in 1926 opposite the great Lionel Barrymore, since which time he has appeared in over two hundred movies. He once even doubled for Shirley Temple!

The story progresses that Max first meets Aunt Entity when he arrives in Bartertown after having been attacked and robbed in the desert. If he wants his belongings back, Aunty says he will have to kill a man for her, more specifically a lumbering giant known as The Blaster (Paul Larsson). The dispute is to be settled in Thunderdome, the futuristic equipment of an old Roman arena, where contestants are harnessed to strong elastic and bounced around until one comes out victorious — and the other comes out dead. Compressed air cylinders worked by hand controls were actually used to give the performers more lift during these scenes. 'Thunderdome is a combination of religious spectacle and the Super Bowl' says Miller, and the excitingly shot Thunderdome battle between Max and Blaster is one of the film's main action highlights.

Needless to say brain triumphs over brawn, but Max refuses to finish his opponent off and is thus banished to the scorching desert. He wanders around until, near death, he is discovered by a tribe of wild children. They mistake him for a long-awaited messiah who will lead them to the promised Tomorrow-morrow Land, and though he doesn't really want to get involved, it ends up that he has to return to Bartertown to overthrow the tyrant Turner in the movie's action packed finale.

No Mad Max adventure would be complete without a stunt-packed chase sequence, and the one here is up to Miller's usually high standards. This time Max is on board a train, with Entity and her minions pursuing at breakneck speed. The "train" is actually a 16 wheel Mack lorry, stripped down and totally rebuilt (with train wheels added) by master mechanic Dave Thomas. The baddies' vehicles, supposedly powered by methane gas, are the concept of production designer Grace Walker, who created insect-like and skeletal cars from a standard chassis, powered by Ford V8 and Toyota Land Cruiser engines and equipped with four wheel drive to withstand the rugged terrain. In all 25 such vehicles were constructed — and demolished — for the film. As always, Miller worked out the chase sequence beforehand, using detailed storyboards to set up the camera positions. 'You are really trying to choreograph the little bits of film, approaching it in the same way a composer does music. It's almost a form of visual rock and roll.' This sort of planning takes a lot of the danger out of it also; not one stunt man has ever been injured on a *Mad Max* movie despite the incredible chances they appear to take on screen!



Beyond The Thunderdome is a richly textured, atmospheric piece of filmmaking that is a long way from the technically rough-edged first in the series. George Miller himself admits 'I think there's been a significant leap between the three films. I think we're better filmmakers now.' But the director is adamant that the Mad Max saga is now over, and that our last glimpse of him here, wandering off alone into the wastelands, is indeed a final one. But I should be very surprised if he doesn't turn up again. Because despite what Miller and Tina Turner say, the world needs a hero like Max Rockatansky — Mad or not!

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